

SWEETGRASS DEVELOPMENT

SERVING NORTH CENTRAL MONTANA – CASCADE, GLACIER, PONDERA, TETON AND TOOLE COUNTIES

EXHIBIT 4

DATE 3/9/2011

SB 294

March 8, 2011

TO: Chairperson Elsie Arntzen and Members of the House Business and Labor Committee

RE: Support of SB 294; An Act to Revise the Workforce Training Grant Program

Sweetgrass Development is comprised of a five county region in North Central Montana including Glacier, Cascade, Pondera, Teton and Toole Counties. Sweetgrass Development is an Economic Development District with designation through the U.S. Economic Development Administration as well as a Certified Regional Development District through the state of Montana. The mission and objectives of the organization are to assist the governments and citizens in each county and the Blackfeet Nation, achieve their economic goals, while preserving their distinct cultures and way of life.

Sweetgrass Development supports SB 294, an act revising the workforce training grant program. This program has been utilized many times within our region. In most instances, the program was incredibly successful. There are a few exceptions, where the funds were obligated, but the wage requirements were not able to be met. This bill will assist those manufacturing entities who were unable to meet the wage requirements and thus unable to utilize the training dollars.

Modifying the wage requirement will allow smaller manufacturers to provide the training necessary to be competitive. Allowing a lower training wage rate will provide for increased production, ultimately providing higher wages, resulting in an increased local tax base and additional state funding. During these economic times, additional funding is essential for companies to increase the number of trained employees to meet the growing demand from consumers, as we recover from the recession. Manufacturing occurs on multiple levels and this legislation evens the playing field for those entities that may be just getting started, or that need the additional funding to keep up in an ever changing business world. Education and training is the key to any successful endeavor and modifying the wage requirements for workforce training is a step in the right direction, paving the way for a skilled workforce and future economic development in our state.

We urge you to please support SB 294

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Sarah Converse
Executive Director
Sweetgrass Development